THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) As per State of Forest Report 2003 prepared by Forest Survey of India, the Forest and Tree Cover of the country is 23.68 percent. It follows from the above figure that approximately 30.7 million hectares of additional cover has to be added to bring 33 percent of the geographical area of the country under Forest and Tree cover. The Wastelands Atlas of India 2003 prepared by National Remote Sensing Agency and Ministry of Rural Development indicates that 55.27 million hectares of various categories of wastelands are available. The extent of available wastelands would suffice for additional afforestation of plantation needed to achieve the above 33 percent Forest and Tree cover target.

(c) and (d) A multi Stakeholder Partnership framework for forestation of degraded lands in the country has been mooted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to mobilize financial resources from the private sector. The framework for forestation envisages a tripartite arrangement among the State Governments, the local communities, and the sponsor which may be from the private sector.

Encroachment of Kolleru lake

1230. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that Kolleru, one of the country's largest freshwater lakes, is encroached and gradually taken over by the aqua mafia;

(b) whether it is a fact that in 1999, its 75,000 acres were declared a bird sanctuary, but the exploitation continued;

(c) whether it is a fact that the illegal fish farming in Kolleru has grown to become a Rs. 900 crore business; and

(d) if so, the steps Government propose to take to save the Kolleru?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) Yes, Sir. As reported by Government of Andhra Pradesh, parts of Kolleru lake are under encroachment.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. 77,138 acres was declared as Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary by State Government of Andhra Pradesh in the year 1999.

There are several illegal fish tanks in the lake, but the value of the business is not estimated.

(d) Eviction of all encroachments and dismantling of the fish tanks have been taken up by District Collectors, West Godavari and Krishna Districts, in compliance of orders of Andhra Pradesh High Court, dated 30.7.2001 in W.P. No. 33587/98 and 14297/01.

Lift Irrigation and power projects in Andhra Pradesh

1231. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of all the irrigation projects including lift irrigation and power projects in Andhra Pradesh which are still pending for site and environment clearance from Government;

(b) the details of various reasons for not giving such clearances for such crucial irrigation projects, expeditiously;

(c) whether Government would assure of co-ordinating, monitoring and expediting the clearance process on a war-footing in the large interest of the Nation with regards to increase in Agricultural production and to prevent escalation of the cost of projects due to delay in giving clearances; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) The irrigation & power projects which are still under consideration for site clearance are — (1) Dumagundem Lift Irrigation Project (2) Galeru Nagari Sujala Shravanti (3) Mahatma Gandhi Lift Irrigation Project (4) Jawahar (Nettempadu) Lift Irrigation Project and (5) Dumagundem Hydro-electric Project and for environmental clearance are — (1) Vamsadhara Project phase II of stage II, (2) Veligonda Project, (3) Sripadasagar Project, (4) Handri Niva Sujala Shravanti, (5) 64 MW coal based captive power plant (expansion project at Paloncha by M/s Nav Bharat Ferrow Alloys Ltd. and (6) 43 MW coal based thermal power plant in Nalgonda District by M/s Sitapuram Power Ltd.

(b) Requisite information/clarifications sought by the Ministry are still awaited from the State Government/project proponent.